

President Castro replied, "Do you play any sports?"

I said, "I play squash every day."

He said, "That is my sport."

Throughout the evening, the Cuban President frequently dispatched an aide or minister in the wee hours to produce a document or find an official's name. The aides performed their research in short order. In one case, President Castro wanted the name of a U.S. Senator who had visited Cuba in 1977, which turned out to be former Sen. Lowell Weicker of Connecticut.

The next morning—or, more accurately, later Thursday morning—we met with Cardinal Ortega. Like Dr. Miller of the Havana synagogue, Cardinal Ortega also said the Cuban regime had adopted a more open attitude toward religion, from the previous "climate of fear." He attributed the thaw in the government's position to a recognition that it was not easy to erase religious faith. He noted there have always been diplomatic relations between Havana and the Vatican.

As for living conditions in Cuba under Castro, the Cardinal said the obvious in noting widespread poverty. On human rights, he said the Castro regime always equates human rights as the right to health, study and education, a low threshold.

Our visit was facilitated by the assistance and cooperation of the U.S. team and the Cuban government.

#### CHILD ACCESS PREVENTION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as the 1999 school year came to a close, our Nation was shocked by the incidences of school violence that claimed so many lives. In the aftermath of these tragedies, Americans have become more sensitized to the dangers of guns and the easy access that children have to them. Yet, despite this additional scrutiny by parents, guns continue to claim the lives of young people. Each day, more children are dying, not just in schoolyards, but in the home. They are killed by guns in unintentional shootings.

Unintentional shootings are among the leading causes of death for young people. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, each day at least one person under the age of 19 is killed by an unintentional shooting. Unsafe guns are an enormous danger to these young people, who are the victims of 33 percent of all accidental firearm deaths. And in Michigan, people under the age of 19 make up more than 50 percent of the fatalities caused by unintentional shootings.

Unintentional shootings almost always occur at home, when a child finds a loaded weapon and while playing with it, shoots himself, a sibling, or a young friend. Some parents try to take precautions against these tragedies by hiding their firearm in a drawer, a closet or even under the mattress. Unfortunately, if it is loaded or without a safety lock, it does not matter where that gun is hidden. It has the potential to

kill, and for hundreds of kids each year, it does just that.

Daily shootings resulting from the careless storage of guns can easily be prevented. Locking devices for guns are simple to handle and inexpensive, but they must be used. In the Juvenile Justice bill that passed the Senate just a few weeks ago, an amendment was included that would require all sales, deliveries or transfers of handguns to include a secure gun storage or safety device, which was a step in the right direction. But, there was nothing to require that adults, especially with children in the house, use those safety devices. Safe storage laws, or Child Access Prevention, CAP, laws are needed to ensure that adults store loaded guns with safety devices in place and in locations reasonably inaccessible to children.

There is no doubt that owning a firearm requires precaution and responsibility, especially when young children are around. CAP laws hold adults criminally responsible if a loaded firearm was left where it could be reasonably accessed by a juvenile, and the juvenile uses or brings into public the adult's firearm without the permission of his parent or guardian. Criminal liability would not apply to adults who have no reasonable expectation of having a juvenile on their premises or if a juvenile obtains a firearm as a result of an unlawful entry. CAP laws simply require adults to use common sense safety measures, such as secure gun storage devices or trigger locks for their firearms.

Currently, there are 16 States that have enacted CAP laws. And since the first law took effect 10 years ago, state CAP laws have reduced unintentional deaths of children by firearms on an average of 23 percent. In Florida, just one year after CAP was enacted, unintentional shootings dropped more than 50 percent. And for every state that has enacted a safe storage law, there is compelling evidence that because of CAP, children are safer at home.

Despite these successes, there are still an overwhelming number of states, including Michigan, without CAP laws. And until there is awareness that guns should be locked up and stored unloaded, guns will continue to claim the lives of innocent children. Until CAP or safe storage laws are the law of the land, people will continue to learn the hard way that the guns in their home meant for protection will continue to claim the lives of those they are trying to protect.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, June 23, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,594,431,506,414.50 (Five trillion, five hundred ninety-four billion, four hundred thirty-one million, five hundred six thousand, four hundred fourteen dollars and fifty cents).

One year ago, June 23, 1998, the Federal debt stood at \$5,500,927,000,000

(Five trillion, five hundred billion, nine hundred twenty-seven million).

Five years ago, June 23, 1994, the Federal debt stood at \$4,598,158,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred ninety-eight billion, one hundred fifty-eight million).

Ten years ago, June 23, 1989, the Federal debt stood at \$2,780,957,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred eighty billion, nine hundred fifty-seven million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$2 trillion—\$2,813,474,506,414.50 (Two trillion, eight hundred thirteen billion, four hundred seventy-four million, five hundred six thousand, four hundred fourteen dollars and fifty cents) during the past 10 years.

#### NOMINATION OF RICHARD HOLBROOKE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am announcing, today, my intention to place a hold on the nomination of Mr. Richard Holbrooke to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. I would like to explain for the benefit of my colleagues why I have done so.

First, let me explain that I have nothing against Mr. Holbrooke. He is simply caught in the middle. The issue can be cleared up very, very quickly, if reasonable heads come together.

At issue is the outrageous treatment by the State Department of one of its employees. Her name is Linda Shenwick. She is Counselor for Resources Management at the United States U.N. Mission. She is the Mission's expert on financial and management matters.

Ms. Shenwick has been instrumental in bringing to light many of the waste and mismanagement issues associated with the U.N. She's been an invaluable source of information and insight for the people's branch of government. Some people in the State Department, apparently all the way to the top, don't much care for Ms. Shenwick's candor with Congress. And so they painted a big, ol' target on Ms. Shenwick, and have come after her, relentlessly.

You see, Ms. Shenwick is guilty of committing the crime of telling the truth. And when you commit truth, you're history in the State Department.

Here is how the State Department has treated Ms. Shenwick. I'd like my colleagues to know this, so they can judge for themselves whether this is conduct befitting such a grand institution as the State Department.

Ms. Shenwick has been "Felix Bloched." You remember Felix Bloch. He was investigated while under suspicion for espionage. He was put on non-duty status while he was investigated. That's now what they've done to Ms. Shenwick, effective last Friday at 5:30 pm.

That's not all. Before kicking her out of her office last week, she was not allowed to talk to other employees. They could not talk to her. She had to keep her door closed at all times. She could

not access the main computer in the office. They forced her to fly to Washington, with little or no notice, for meetings that didn't occur.

At the end of this month, Ms. Shenwick must report to a new job in Washington, in an area in which she has no background. They know that she wants to stay in New York. They seem determined to break this woman down. So far, they have not succeeded.

Mr. President, I have a long-standing practice of taking up the cause of witnesses before the Congress who have done the right thing at great risk to their careers. Before I do this, I must make sure the individual has sufficient credibility, and is being retaliated against for their disclosures in the public interest. I have spoken with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and on both sides of Capitol Hill. They all agree she has credibility, and has provided solid, accurate information to Congress. It is information that has led to management reforms and more effective controls of the U.N. budget. No one has ever successfully challenged her information. Instead, the Department has attacked her.

In all the whistleblower cases I have worked over the years, this one stands out. I have never seen such a blatant, raw attempt to harass and silence a whistleblower who simply told the truth. Can the truth be that offensive to the State Department?

My action to put a hold on the Holbrooke nomination is a contest over which message will prevail. By its actions, the message the State Department wants to send is fear. Every other employee of the USUN Mission has their eyes firmly fixed on this case. The State Department wants them to know, if they commit truth like Ms. Shenwick did, that they, too, will get the "Felix Bloch Treatment." I guess committing truth is just as bad as committing espionage.

Mr. President, It's my hope that we in this body will intercept that message, and send one of our own. The people's right to know the truth is what we care about. And those who help Congress know the truth will be protected, not punished.

Until this month, Ms. Shenwick and her attorney had been negotiating with the State Department to find her a new job in New York. There was some progress, but the Department started negotiating in bad faith. The talks broke down, and Ms. Shenwick is being transferred to Washington at the end of the month, to a job for which she has no background.

I am willing to release my hold of the nomination of Mr. Holbrooke forthwith. But before that happens, fairness and civility must prevail. Good faith negotiations must re-start, and an agreement must be reached by both parties. This could happen within 24 hours, if desired.

In 1997, another member of this body put a similar hold on a nominee until the Department resolved Ms.

Shenwick's situation. The Secretary agreed to resolve the issues and keep Ms. Shenwick at the USUN Mission. The hold was lifted. But instead of resolving the matter, the harassment continued. And it continues to this day.

That will not happen again. The hold gets lifted when there's an agreement in writing.

Mr. President, I hope that my colleagues appreciate the reasonableness of my position, and the importance of the message that I am asking this body to send. I hope I can count on their support in the public's best interest. And we can then allow Mr. Holbrooke to get on with his important work in New York.

#### EDUCATION EXPRESS ACT OF 1999 (ED-EXPRESS)

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, yesterday, Senator DOMENICI and I introduced the Education Express Act (Ed-Express). This legislation builds on the success of the Ed-Flex bill, which earlier this year passed the Senate and House of Representatives by overwhelming margins, and was signed into law in April.

It is critical that this Congress builds on Ed-Flex's themes of flexibility and accountability. As we consider the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we must continue the push to cut red tape and remove overly-prescriptive federal mandates on federal education funding. At the same time, we must hold states and local schools accountable for increasing student achievement.

Flexibility, combined with accountability, must be our objective. The end result of our reform effort must spark innovation—innovation designed to provide all students a world-class education.

This need for flexibility and accountability in education was repeated again and again in hearings held by the Senate Budget Committee's Task Force on Education. The Task Force, on which Senator DOMENICI serves as an Ex-officio member, and I serve as the chairman, issued a report entitled "Prospects for Reform: The State of Education and the Federal Role."

In this report the Task Force made several recommendations of ways to improve the federal education effort. The number one recommendation noted, "In light of the continuing proliferation of federal categorical programs, the Task Force recommends that federal education programs be consolidated. This effort should include reorganization at the federal level, and block grants for the states. The Task Force particularly favors providing states flexibility to consolidate all federal funds into an integrated state strategic plan to achieve national educational objectives for which the state would be held accountable."

The Ed-Express bill is the legislative response to this recommendation. Specifically, \$37 billion over the next five

years would be provided from the federal government as part of a larger consolidation of duplicative and limiting categorical programs into a much more streamlined and direct funding stream to states and localities for a variety of education purposes.

We have a national emergency in education. To address this crisis, the federal government will commit additional resources for a five-year period in order to improve student achievement and the quality of our teaching force.

This would infuse significant funds to the hands of parents, communities, and local/State governments to improve the education achievement of students.

Under this plan, States may elect to receive elementary and secondary education funding by "Direct Check." Incentives such as replacing existing burdensome federal categorical programs are provided to encourage States to choose the direct check option. A State, however, may choose to remain in the categorical system.

In the spirit of Ed-Flex, this legislation that we introduced also looks to the Governors for leadership. States which opt for the Direct Check Flexibility will receive their education funding upon the adoption of a State plan written by the governor that outlines the goals and objectives for the funds.

The Nation's governors are leading the way for education reform in this country. It was the Nation's Governors who helped bring about the successful passage of Ed-Flex. We at the Federal level must do all we can to advance the reform efforts taking place at the State and local levels.

Ed-Express establishes a Challenge Fund, a Teacher Quality Fund, and an Academic Opportunity Fund.

Challenge Funds would be provided to States and localities with the flexibility to design and implement programs to improve student learning. These funds may be used to purchase new books, hire teachers, promote character education, provide tutoring services for students, and for a variety of other education initiatives.

Teacher Quality Funds may be used for such activities as providing professional development opportunities for teachers, merit pay, increasing teachers' salaries, and alternative certification programs.

Academic Opportunity Funds may be used to provide governors who choose the Direct Check option with the ability to reward school districts and schools that meet or exceed state-defined goals and performance objectives for student achievement and teacher quality.

The need for a consolidated Federal education effort has never been greater. I think that we are all familiar with the statistics that show our students are not able to keep up academically with their international counterparts. In fact, the longer a student stays in an American school the more his/her academic skills deteriorate. We must draw